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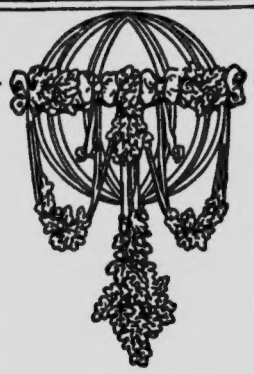
SPEECH

DELIVERED BY

Hon. James W. Gerard

FORMER AMBASSADOR TO GERMANY FOR THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

before the Canadian Club of Victoria, B. C.
at a Luncheon held in the Empress Hotel,
:: :: Friday, September 28th, 1917. :: ::



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CANADIAN CLUB LUNCHEON

FRIDAY, 28TH SEPTEMBER, 1917

In introducing the speaker, the President, **Mr. John Cochrane**, said:

Just one month ago we had the pleasure of entertaining two statesmen from Australia, one of our sister nations within the British Empire. Today we are gratified to realize that within the wider sweep of our Anglo-Saxon family circle we include as our guest on this occasion one of the most distinguished of those diplomats, the records of whose achievements adorn the pages of the history of the Great Republic to the South.

To him for nearly three years, as ambassador to the most military autocratic court in the world, was entrusted the task of protecting the interests not only of his own American democracy but of our British democracy and of our Allies as well. Right nobly did he discharge this trust.

It is not for me at this time to enter into an account of his activities during that period, but I eagerly take this opportunity as president of a Canadian Club in a Canadian city of expressing to him a sentiment which I am sure permeates all our hearts, a sentiment of deep appreciation of the magnificent service which he has rendered to our Empire.

In this connection I am reminded of an editorial comment in a leading American newspaper at the time when the Mexican situation was at a crisis. The editor made this remark, "Every time we think of Mexico we thank God for Canada." Ladies and gentlemen, we, as Canadians, can cordially reciprocate that sentiment and that expression today by saying "Every time we think of Germany we thank God for the United States."

How does it come that a former American ambassador is addressing a Canadian Club in the capital city of a Canadian province? This gathering today is a product of Anglo-Saxon democracy, that mighty force which is exerting its influence in the cause of liberty and justice in every quarter of the globe. Somewhere in those Rocky Mountains, which are the glory alike of the Province of British Columbia and the State of Washington, there is perhaps a river which in its descent from its parent glacier to the sea is split in twain by some gigantic obstruction in its path. From that point onward these two streams, although composed of the same element, pursue their individual courses and experience their own varying vicissitudes. Sometimes through quiet reaches, then over rapids which would seem to threaten their very existence, these two streams reach a point where another common obstruction tends to make their courses converge until finally they re-unite, and from thence flow onward one mighty volume, to water and fertilize the plain and make it a pleasant place for human habitation. So with the river of our Anglo-Saxon democracy.

Rudely rent asunder by the unjust and short-sighted policy of the days of George the Third, forced further apart by the unfortunate war of 1812, these two resultant streams for 140 years have each pursued its own individual course. The British branch passed over the long rapids of the Napoleonic wars, the Crimean war and the Boer wars. The American branch passed over the rapids of the Mexican war, the Civil war, which threatened to again divide it, and latterly the rapids of the Spanish-American war.

A process of mutual attraction was meanwhile proceeding. This was hastened by the common menace of the German dream of autocratic world-domination. In August, 1914, these two streams of Anglo-Saxon democracy had approached each other so closely that it was possible to see from either one the sympathetic bosom of the other. In April, 1917, actual union took place.

We stand today, ladies and gentlemen, at the confluence of those two streams and are beginning to appreciate the magnitude of their combined volume. What of the future? No

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human mind can predict what benefits the future holds for humanity when the democratic sentiments of the two great English-speaking nations of the world are united in the cause of justice and liberty.

However, while we cannot predict the future we can and do with grateful hearts recognize that fact which surely exists in the present, namely, that the democracies of Great Britain and the United States are one in their support of high ideals which effect the destiny alike of the individual and the state.

For the individual they are determined that he shall have the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and for the state they have mutually pledged their vast resources to insure that government of the people, for the people, by the people shall not perish from the earth. Your honour, ladies and gentlemen, I consider it a very high privilege indeed to be able to present to you as our guest today the Hon. James W. Gerard, recently ambassador to Germany for the United States of America.

HON. JAMES W. GERARD

Mr. President, your Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor, ladies and gentlemen: Although I attended a banquet of the Canadian Club in New York, I don't think I have had the pleasure of meeting so many British subjects together since I left Germany. And when I visited those Prison Camps of Germany, where your fellow-countrymen were interned, I am very proud to say that even at a very early period of the War a great many of those British soldiers spoke with a strong Yankee accent. I know I went to visit one camp and a Highlander with his kilt came forward and said, "Hello, Judge;" and I said, "What sort of a Highlander are you?" and he said, "I come from the Highlands of Orange, New Jersey."

I don't know whether any of the Returned Soldiers that I see about the room have been in the prison camps of Germany and know anything of the horrors at the prisons there, which the prisoners had to suffer, especially at the commencement of the War. The disappointment of the Germans at the entrance of England into the War, because they had not expected it, was so great and so bitter that your soldiers were treated with unexampled cruelty. They were starved and beaten. The camps, of course, much depended upon the commander of them. They were all very strict in discipline, and all of them treated prisoners of war as convicts and not as soldiers taken in honourable battle. Some of these camps stand up beyond the others for their record of cruelty. Take the camp at Wittenberg. In a few weeks, I believe, they will celebrate through the world the four-hundredth Anniversary of Martin Luther, and Wittenberg was the town where he nailed his thesis on the door of the Schloss-Kirche, and Wittenberg was the town where one of the prison camps was established. There were British, Belgians and Russians in that camp, and some of the British medical officers who were taken with their troops, and who, by the rules of war, were obliged to remain with their troops while they needed them. They put the Russians who were suffering from typhus fever in the same compound with the British, French and Belgian, and when the British medical officers protested, the commander of the camp said, "You have to learn to know your Allies," and just as certainly condemned a number of them to death as if he had ordered them to be shot. In that camp there were a number of dogs that were trained to attack prisoners with a British uniform. They were not kept on the outside of the camp, but the guards took them with them in the camp, and time and again they attacked the prisoners, encouraged by their guards. The British medical officers were even struck by German private soldiers, something which in the German army is a thing absolutely not to be conceived of. I know afterwards, when I complained about conditions in this camp to the Foreign Minister, I said, "What would you do to me if I should go back and visit the

camp and shoot those dogs?" And shortly afterwards they removed the dogs from the camp. That is the only way you can get any action, any result from the Germans during the War, because they take a delight in their cruelty. There was no public sentiment in Germany against it, no voice lifted up, and the character of the whole people seems to have changed—they seem to have become all Prussians, because there was a time when their great writer, Goethe, said, "A Prussian is born a brute, and civilization will make him ferocious," and his prophesy has been borne out.

In that camp at Wittenberg when I went, there were about thirty-six civilian prisoners. All the civilian British prisoners were kept on the race track near Berlin, where for two or three years men of education, doctors and lawyers, and tourists who were caught in Germany when war was declared, have had to live six in a box stall, almost going crazy because they are never alone. And at Wittenberg, because of this outbreak of typhus fever, thirty-six civilian prisoners had been kept. I got the German authorities to order the removal of the camp to Ruhleben, and when they were told they were to be moved, one of them actually fell down on the floor and died of joy, because he had been told he was to leave the horrors of this camp.

I have said in America that I wish that the Prussian Irishmen, because we have a few, could have gone with me to the camp at Limberg, where the Germans collected 2,500 Irish prisoners, believing they could seduce them into joining the Prussian army. They sent that poor half-witted creature, Sir Roger Casement, into the camp, and he succeeded in persuading about thirty to leave that time, and I am sure that out of that thirty some twenty-eight or twenty-nine left because they thought they would find means to get out of Germany. But the remainder, some 2,470 remained true, as I am convinced Irishmen always will, to their oath and their flag; and when he came again, they chased Sir Roger out of the camp. And there began a period of persecution of those Irishmen who had refused to join the German colours; they even went so far as to kill them on flimsy excuses. They sent them out in working parties and then killed them, pretending they had tried to escape. I found out about two who had been shot in this way, and went to the camp and protested and demanded the right to see the men who were working with them, but that was refused me. I found out that one of the guards who had killed an Irish prisoner on some flimsy excuse had, with the beautiful German idea of the fitness of things, attended the funeral of his victim!

Then take the case of Captain Fryatt. He was taken from this camp at Ruhleben. He had been captured from a merchant ship and the Germans had got the idea that on some previous occasion he had attempted to ram a German submarine—perfectly legitimate, in self-defence. I heard he had been removed upon some such charge and taken to Zeebrugge, and I sent over a note to the Foreign Office at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and said I wanted a chance to name counsel for him, and asked to have the trial postponed until I could find out whether they would allow me to name a German counsel for him and send out someone from the Embassy to see him, an unfortunate British Captain, in a strange country, not speaking the language. And on that occasion I am convinced that the German Foreign Office backed up my request, but the answer of the naval authorities to my request, which they probably received about 7 or 8 o'clock the next morning, was to take Captain Fryatt out, try him before 11, and shoot him before 12. That is not only an injustice, depriving a man of the most elemental right to communicate with his family before he is killed, to have something to say in his own defence when he is being tried in a land where he does not understand the language, but it was a direct insult also to the United States of America which I represented.

The Japanese prisoners—or rather they were not prisoners of war, but in the beginning of the war there were a number of our friends the Japanese in Germany—they were all seized and imprisoned immediately. The Foreign Office claimed that it was to preserve them from the fury of the populace, and I believe there was something in what they said, because for some unknown reason the Germans believed that the Japanese

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were going to prove untrue to their treaty, and about five days before Japan declared war on Germany there was a torchlight demonstration of joy in front of the Japanese Embassy in Berlin, because the Berliners believed they were going to join Germany in the War. So you can imagine the rage when Japan stood to her treaty. When I finally secured the release of the Japanese and sent them out of Germany, I had to send on each occasion a secretary with them, and have the police protect them. On one occasion a number of Japanese were waiting to go to Switzerland on the night train, and I sent out to get them something to eat, and there was not a restaurant in Berlin that would give them anything to eat, so after that I had to arrange to feed them at the Embassy. Even the members of the Siamese Legation there, who resembled the Japanese, were unable to go out in the streets because of the fury of the Berliners.

When I came back from Europe and we had declared war on Germany, the first thing I did was to go out and make some speeches in favour of our proposed Conscription Law—universal military service for the war, and I am thankful that we put that through. In the first months of the War the Germans used to say to me, when we were talking over the War, they would say, "England will never adopt compulsory military service, it will never come, we are not afraid of it." I think they have changed their minds now. And when I was down to settle, as we thought permanently, the submarine question with the Kaiser at the headquarters, in April, 1916, I would talk with the chief officials in the evenings, and they said, "What could America do if we did take up this submarine warfare, and you should declare war?" I told them most of the inventions that were being used in the War were American inventions, that the submarine, the aeroplane, the telegraph and telephone, which latter are so largely used and useful, were all Yankee inventions, and I thought possibly we might be able to develop something further, if they forced us to join this war. They said, "Perhaps, but what would you do in a military way?" I said, "Perhaps you will do to us as you did to England; perhaps you will act with such cruelty towards our prisoners; perhaps you will kill women and children, and arouse us to adopt military service." I put forward that proposition quite timidly, but they said, "No, that is impossible with all the people we have there who sympathize with us." So think what a blow it must be to the morale of Germany when we declared for compulsory military service in the very first round of the War.

And I want to tell you one thing, and that is that we are going to war efficiently. In the Spanish War—I was a Major in the National Guard in 1898, and was stuck in one of the large camps. But there is no comparison between what happened then and what happened in all our previous wars, and all that is happening now.

Our President—our great President (prolonged cheers)—has gone at this task with the breadth of comprehension and view that no one believed could be shown in America. Go and see, as I did yesterday, the camp near Seattle, with a thousand of the finest young fellows in the world in the naval camp there. See what we are doing all over the country. I spoke to those young men here in Seattle yesterday, and I spoke towards the end of August at Newport, in the State of Rhode Island, to a lot of young naval recruits there. That is something for the Kaiser to think that between these two points are over .3,000 miles, and all these 3,000 miles in between are now preparing for war, are now aroused to a belief in the great danger which the whole world was in from the Prussian lust for conquest. Because these people in 1914 started out to conquer the world, and they very nearly did it. If it had not been for the entrance of England into the War they would have had the world by the throat. And we stand together on both sides of the line—(cheers)—for the Monroe doctrine—(laughter). If the Germans should win or draw this War by any possibility, their first attack would be on the doctrine of the good President Monroe. They have long had an eye—long had a desire—for a place in the sun, in South America or somewhere in the Western Hemisphere.

When I had a talk with the Kaiser in October, 1915, he stood up in front of me and put his face about three inches from mine and said, "I shall

stand no nonsense from America after this War." I wonder if he has ever thought about that since. But that has been the dream of the pan-German and the war party there. It did not come out of Germany, although their speakers and their orators and their newspapers were all proclaiming it, because in the first place their censorship would not let it out, and in the second place, I am sorry to say, a great many of our American correspondents there were pro-Germans.

Von Tirpitz issued a manifesto to his adherents, in which he said, "We must keep the coast of Flanders, because we need it to make war on England and America," and in an interview published in the press, where his identity was very thinly veiled, he said, "We must take up this submarine war and in two or three months we will bring England to her knees, and as a condition of saving England from starvation we will accept the British Fleet, and then with that fleet we will sail to the United States and collect from that fat, cowardly nation the expenses of the War." And the German Foreign Minister told me, talking of the submarine campaign, "We only want two months of this to finish England, three months to sign the peace—that is all we require."

That has been their belief, so think of their disappointment, and think how long it is since February 1st, when they declared it, when they thought that America had sunk so low, that my country had fallen to such a state of degeneration that they would stand under a blow in the face without a murmur.

And the one thing that all of us have got to look out for is to see now that there is no German peace. It will be impossible ever again to put together such a league of nations against the Prussian military autocracy, and they hope to make a peace which will enable them to detach some of the Allies, to bring some of the Allies perhaps over to their side, and then commence this over again; once more start for the rule and conquest of the world; prepare themselves in the light of their experience in this War; have ammunition at hand at the Battle of the Marne, when there will be no Joffre, like a second Martell, to drive back the hordes.

The German people are not yet sick of war, and I don't think we can bring them down by either starvation or revolution. Revolution is practically impossible. I have seen the poor, miserable workingmen of Berlin come creeping out of their cellars and try to hold a meeting, and the whole town was immediately cut up into districts, and the streets in all the districts lined with police, so it was impossible without a pass to cross from one district to another. And then they have all their men from 18 to 45 in the ranks of the army. As you know, the German officers are all taken from one class. In our country a young man who goes out to war, goes out with the belief that if he behaves himself and shows capacity and bravery he may become an officer. Some of the highest officers in your army today came from the ranks. But none of these poor Germans, no matter what capacity or bravery they show, can ever become an officer, because their system is that each regiment is like a club. The Kaiser can make a man an officer, but not an officer of any regiment, that regiment could keep him out. There are a certain number of reserve officers, but these very seldom attain to a rank higher than that of captain. The reserve officers are men of education, who pass a certain standard of examination and serve for one year in the army instead of two. They serve for a period of seven weeks one year and again another seven weeks the next year and become reserve officers. The control of the army is kept in the hands of the Patente Officiers, who all belong to that Prussian ruling class.

Now, I know perhaps that you want to know some things about Germany that I am able to tell you, or about the War, so I am going to take the chance of allowing you to ask me any questions, and I will try to answer them.

Hon. E. G. Prior: Mr. Gerard, I have been requested to ask you the following question—There was an article in The Colonist this morning, in which it mentioned that perhaps you would be glad to give us a little information as to whether, in your judgment, the appeal of your President to the German people, differ-

entiating between them and the Kaiser and his military party, has any prospect of success.

Mr. Gerard: Yes, I do, but the situation is extraordinary. You have in Germany today no great Liberal party. In the first place, remember, that the Reichstag is nothing but a debating society, because over the Reichstag is the second chamber, called the Bundesrath, composed of twenty-five ruling princes of Germany, and the Reichstag vote as they are told by these ruling princes. Therefore the Reichstag itself has no power which is not referred to it by the twenty-five ruling princes of Germany. In the Reichstag, and it has no more force than that, you have three parties: the Conservatives, who stand for the rights of the Crown, the caste system and the present system of government over the country, without practically the election of any officials who amount to anything in the country. Then you have the Social Democrats, who compose one-third of the Reichstag and are elected by the industrial population of the great cities; and because the Social Democrats have declared themselves against the monarchy, and because they are also against religion and in favour of free love, they are regarded as an outcast caste in Germany. No Social Democrat is ever given any office or can become an officer in the army, and you remember before the War, when they had that trouble in Zebern, when an officer killed a civilian, that this officer said to his men that he would give a reward of 100 marks to the first man to bring down one of those damned Socialist Democrats.

And in the centre of the Reichstag sits the Roman Catholic party, or Centrum, which grew up through Bismarck, because Bismarck, after the Franco-Prussian War, and after he had created the German Empire, did not want to have in the German Empire any force which he thought would be powerful enough to make any stand in the Empire, or have any influence. So he himself commenced what he himself called the "Kultur Kampf." The Roman Catholics were driven out, civil marriages ordered, and so on, and then the Roman Catholics had to organize in a political party, and have remained organized in that party until today, and the members of that party, composing about one-third of the Reichstag between the Social Democratic party and the Conservative party, sit there and vote as Roman Catholics, and Roman Catholics alone. And, therefore, it is a matter of the greatest surprise to me that any Roman Catholic anywhere in the world should be in favour of Prussian autocracy.

Now, you have that situation in the Reichstag in the political parties, and no matter how much the people may wish to rise against system, because all of them from 18 to 45 are in the ranks, and because of this political system, it is very hard for them to do anything, because they cannot meet in order to make any advance in arousing the populace.

But the thing that is pressing upon Germany more than the food question, more than the prospect of revolution, is the economic situation. The Germans, after all, must have some reasoning faculty, and they have not tried to pay for this War as they go. They have not even increased their Income Tax. The only war tax they have put on has been a 50 per cent. on war profits. They have raised the money by loans, and today these loans amount to about 80 billions of marks. Now, the Germans themselves say, "It does not matter what we do, because we are only paying the money to each other; it does not leave Germany." But, as Mark Twain said of the people of the Island of Bermuda, he said that as far as he could see they lived by taking in each other's washing. But this is not an economic way of carrying on the War. These loans have been forced, practically, not only from the richer people, but from all the large banks, and other corporations of the country, and every corporation which has the savings of the people. Now, you are getting to a point—because a country can only raise a certain amount every year. The sum is hard to fix and hard to determine—but the Germans are getting to the point when the interest on these war loans, of five per cent., plus their previous indebtedness, will amount to more than the increment of the country, and so the savings banks and insurance companies will fail and the people will find nothing, and then you will have all the people giving one-third of

their time to the Government to pay the interest on previous debts, and the old people and feeble people supported in the poorhouses. The intelligent Germans see that coming. They have been carrying on with paper money. At the beginning of the War they telegraphed me from Washington, "We hear there is a great financial crisis coming in Germany." And I telegraphed in reply, "Not as long as there is a printing press in the country." When they talk about the German financial situation, you must remember that there is not anything in the country at all. Other countries have debts and have made debts in the War, and will make debts, but they have got their foreign trade, they have got their raw materials, their business, and their national wealth—and Germany is skinned. Those aggressive German merchants who used to travel about the world with their goods have lost the opportunity of making money for over three years, and, more than that, they know that that trade is permanently going, that it is either being captured by other countries, or other countries are learning how to make things they used to buy from Germany. And it is with this only that they have to pay the excess cost of the War. Hollweg stated with regard to the financial programme that the expenses of the War would be paid from the huge indemnities from other countries by whom the leaden weight would be borne, but even the stupidest German merchant is now beginning to feel that some of the leaden weight of German finances is to be attached to his own foot.

Just as the morale of the soldiers in the trenches is being broken—and it is gradually being broken, because they have told me, "We know we cannot win." They have made a great effort, but they feel they will be beaten. A friend of General von Falkenhayn told me, "We mean to lose 500,000 men, and pass through the French line." They made the attempt at Verdun, but did not pass through. But this discouragement is bearing down on the Germans far more than revolution or starvation. They are in a bad way for food. When I left Germany the War Ration was a slice of bread a day and three or four pounds of potatoes a week, sometimes turnips were substituted for potatoes, and you know there is not much nourishment in a turnip. They get a piece of meat about three inches square in a week, including bone and gristle. They get in a week as much butter as was on my table plate today at lunch, and some margerine or fat. No one over six years of age gets any milk, and they get one egg in two weeks, practically no sugar, no tea, no coffee, and nothing else except the things I have told you. The men in the front rank are the best fed, the men in the second rank behind the line and in the third line don't get as good food. The rich have always managed to make out, because for a long time chickens, ducks, geese, etc., were not on the card system, so the rich man, by paying $15 or $20 for a goose, was able to get food to eat; and the people in the country have managed to get more food than the ones in the city, because, although their houses are searched sometimes twice a week by the police, you cannot send a policeman to watch every hen.

That is their food situation, and in spite of that they will manage, I think, to last through, because they take the food from the fields of Northern France and the food from the fields of Roumania and Poland and that part of Russia they occupy. They took the girls and women of Northern France as slaves; I saw them myself, tilling the fields—not for themselves, because the original inhabitants of that part of France and Belgium are supported by Mr. Hoover's Food Commission, which comes from the United States. And so I think from the food point of view Germany will manage to last, and what we have to do is to beat them on the field; to have no illusions, to put off no great measures whatever they are, because we think Germany is going to break down from starvation or revolution. Go at it with all the energy we have, and I think the Anglo-Saxon race has plenty of it left on both sides of the line.

It has been a great pleasure to come here today, a luxury I allowed myself from the tour of speaking in the United States. It would have been the greatest calamity of all the War if in this fearful vortex of war in which we are now engaged, you to the North and we to the South of this imaginery line had not been standing shoulder to shoulder for the right.